

edward johnson building
faculty of music
university of toronto



WILLIAM AIDE, PIANO

WALTER HALL

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 1981

8 P.M.

PROGRAM

Intermezzo in A major, Op. 76, No. 6

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Capriccio in F# minor, Op. 76, No. 1

The Op. 76 Klavierstücke, published in 1879, were Brahms' first works for solo piano in 13 years. During that time, he had dealt with larger classical forms, including the symphony and the string quartet, but the Op. 76 pieces are short, characteristically Romantic piano works. The titles, such as capriccio and intermezzo, do not dictate a standard form, but are used in a freer, poetic sense.

The first piece in the set is the Capriccio in F# minor. It is marked "Un poco agitato", and is very difficult, employing the elaborate figurations that have come to be associated with the composer. The gentle and lyrical Intermezzo in A major utilizes another technique typical of Brahms: the use of two against three.

Sonata quasi una Fantasia in C# minor,
Op. 27, No. 2

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Adagio sostenuto
Allegretto
Presto agitato

Few of Beethoven's works have been as often performed and discussed as the C# minor piano sonata. During the composer's lifetime it was called the Laube (Arbor) Sonata, as it was thought to have been written in an arbor. The better known nickname, "Moonlight" Sonata, was given to the piece by the poet and critic Heinrich Friedrich Rellstab, for whom the adagio of the sonata recalled a moonlit night on the Lake of Lucerne.

The piece was composed in 1801, when Beethoven was becoming aware of his growing deafness. Despite the work's immediate popularity, the composer himself was not overly fond of the sonata. Its success sometimes frustrated and angered him; he once commented to Czerny: "Everybody is always talking about the C# minor sonata! Surely I have written better things." He did not, however, dismiss the work, and as late as 1817 he was considering a voice and piano

setting of the Adagio.

The two Op. 27 sonatas share the legend "quasi una Fantasia"; in the C# minor sonata this is reflected in the song-like freedom of the adagio, and more importantly in a re-arrangement of the order of the movements. The adagio opens the work, followed by a short scherzo in Db major. The large sonata-form movement is saved for the finale; it is in the key of C# minor.

Ballade in G minor, Op. 23

FREDERIC CHOPIN

The four ballades of Chopin span most of his active career as a composer, from 1831 to 1842. It has been suggested that Chopin wrote these pieces programatically on a series of epic poems by Adam Mickiewicz, but most modern critics give little credence to this notion. There can be no doubt, however, that the ballades are highly dramatic and poetic pieces, illustrating Chopin's ability to compose creatively for new and larger forms.

The first ballade, written between 1831 and 1835, is built around two contrasting themes. The first, in G minor, is heard after a short introduction, and has a sombre, waltz-like quality. The second theme, in Eb, is more tranquil. Both melodies undergo many transformations in the course of the piece--the first becomes more passionate while the second becomes quite heroic. When the first theme returns for the final time, it leads into a furiously dramatic coda that ends the work with an exciting selection of piano sonorities.

INTERMISSION

Ballade in F minor, Op. 52

FREDERIC CHOPIN

The fourth and final ballade, in F minor, dates from 1842, and is among the finest of Chopin's works; containing melodic freshness, melancholy beauty, and an incredible dramatic sweep. A series of lyric episodes and variations leads to the triumphant coda, which is one of the most technically demanding passages in all of Chopin's works.

Five Etudes

FREDERIC CHOPIN

- Op. 10, No. 8 in F major
- Op. 10, No. 12 in C minor
- Op. 25, No. 1 in Ab major
- Op. 10, No. 1 in C major
- Op. 25, No. 11 in A minor

Chopin's 24 Etudes were composed in two groups of twelve, Op. 10 and Op. 25. They were written in 1829-1832 and 1832-1836 respectively, and were dedicated to Liszt--perhaps the only pianist of the time who could play them correctly! Times have changed, however, as Harold C. Schonberg can comment that "If Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier is the pianist's Bible, the...Chopin etudes are his New Testament."

Op. 10, No. 1 in C major is concerned with the technical difficulties of right-hand arpeggios, and No. 8 in F major also deals with right-hand passage technique. Op. 10, No. 12 in C minor is the famous "Revolutionary" etude, so-called because Chopin was believed to have written it after hearing of the collapse of the Polish Revolution in 1831. Robert Schumann felt that the Ab etude (Op. 25, No. 1, nicknamed the "Harp") was the loveliest of all, "a poem rather than an Etude...in which melody and voices mingle." The Op. 25, No. 11 ("Winter Wind") etude in A minor is one of the longest and most structurally involved in the set, as well as being quite technically and interpretively challenging.

- Notes by Jennifer Rycenga Plonsey

Next Faculty of Music Event: Opera Division production of Patience by Gilbert and Sullivan, March 6, 7, 13, 14 at 8 p.m. in MacMillan Theatre.